



Director of
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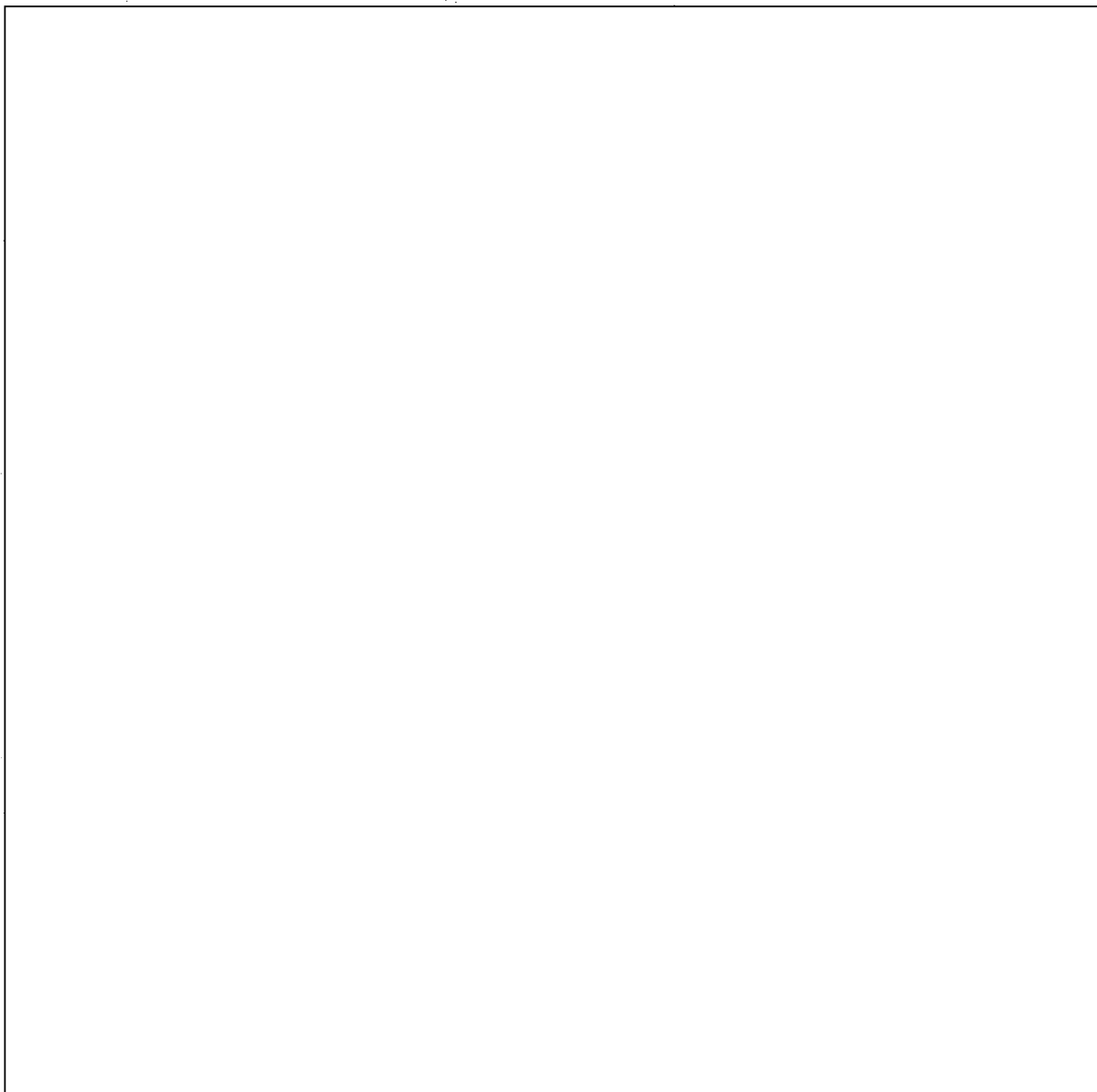
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BRIEFS AND COMMENTS

IRAQ: Coup Plot

Only the outlines of the murky political situation in Iraq are apparent nearly two weeks after the uncovering of a conspiracy against Saddam Husayn, the new President. Saddam apparently was challenged, or believed he was threatened, by a group of senior Baath Party officials and ranking military officers. Many arrests have been made, and some plotters are reported to have been executed.

The motivating force behind the plot remains unclear. Saddam loyalists, who probably see political value in blaming external forces, continue to allege Syrian involvement. The charges are low key, however, and have been made in a manner that does not directly involve Syrian President Assad. The Syrians nevertheless are probably worried that the allegations will bring about a return to hostile relations with Iraq at a time when Damascus has internal security problems and trouble in Lebanon. Syrian Foreign Minister Khaddam was reported to have been in Baghdad yesterday perhaps trying to ensure that bilateral relations remain on an even keel.

Saddam for now seems in firm control, and more arrests are likely. With the exception of Sa'dun Shakir, Iraq's chief intelligence and security official, Iraqi media have made no mention of senior regime figures since last week.

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